



# ORGANIZATION MANUAL OF THE SECRETARIAT

A CONCISE GUIDE TO THE FUNCTIONS AND ORGANIZATION OF THE SECRETARIAT

UNITED NATIONS

NEW YORK

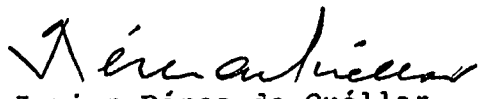
ST/SGB/Organization  
8 June 1989

SECRETARY-GENERAL'S BULLETIN

To: Members of the staff

Subject: ORGANIZATION MANUAL OF THE SECRETARIAT

1. This bulletin contains the table of contents of and introduction to the new Organization Manual of the Secretariat. The description of the organization and functions of each department/office is issued separately as a section of the Manual.
2. Document ST/SGB/Organization of January 1974, including its table of contents and sections A and B, are hereby superseded.

  
Javier Pérez de Cuéllar  
Secretary-General

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# ORGANIZATION MANUAL OF THE SECRETARIAT

## INTRODUCTION

### An overview

1. The Secretariat is one of the six principal organs of the United Nations, the others being the General Assembly, the Security Council, the Economic and Social Council, the Trusteeship Council and the International Court of Justice. It came into being on 1 February 1946, when the first Secretary-General of the United Nations was appointed by the Assembly. Until that time, the Secretariat of the Preparatory Commission of the United Nations had served as the secretariat of the Organization. The Secretariat provides services to the legislative organs of the United Nations, namely, the General Assembly, the Security Council, the Economic and Social Council and the Trusteeship Council, including their subsidiary bodies. The legislative organs adopt resolutions and action programmes for the betterment of many aspects of life, such as the peaceful settlement of disputes between States, the realization of independence, the right to self-determination and other human rights of all peoples of the world, the improvement of socio-economic conditions in all countries, international co-operation in providing relief to victims of conflicts and natural disasters and the adoption of regulations for safeguarding the environment, for the exploitation of marine resources and for activities in outer space. The resolutions and action programmes are the outcome of deliberations of the representatives of Member States in those organs and subsidiary bodies. The Secretariat provides the services that facilitate those deliberations and carries out that part of the work programme they assign to it. The work of the Secretariat is carried out by the staff of the United Nations who are appointed by the Secretary-General. The resources it requires for carrying out the programme of work of the United Nations are provided by the Member States. The Secretariat is located at the Headquarters of the United Nations in New York. It has branch offices at Geneva, Vienna and Nairobi. It also includes the regional commissions' secretariats at Addis Ababa, Baghdad, Bangkok, Geneva and Santiago. Its broad functions in various fields with which the United Nations is concerned, with some variations from field to field, are as follows:

(a) Producing reports and other documents containing information, analyses, historical background, research findings, policy suggestions, etc., that facilitate the deliberations and decision-making by the legislative organs and their subsidiary bodies;

(b) Providing secretariat services to the legislative organs and their subsidiary bodies (e.g., providing secretaries for committees, councils and commissions; assisting in planning the work of the sessions and in conducting the proceedings and in drafting reports);

(c) Providing meeting services (interpretation, verbatim reporting and precis-writing services) to the legislative organs, in accordance with the policies adopted by the General Assembly;

(d) Providing editorial, translation and documents reproduction services for the issuance of United Nations documents in the different working languages, in accordance with the policies adopted by the General Assembly;

(e) Conducting studies and providing information that answer to the priority needs of Governments of member countries, particularly of the developing countries, in meeting challenges in various fields;

(f) Producing statistical publications, information bulletins and analytical work which the General Assembly has decided should be issued by the United Nations in the field concerned;

(g) Organizing conferences, expert group meetings and seminars on topics of concern to the international community, as authorized by the legislative organs;

(h) Providing technical assistance to the developing countries, i.e., providing experts, resources and/or materials to countries, offering training opportunities to officials of countries by way of fellowships to universities and other institutes and inviting them to seminars organized by the United Nations;

(i) Undertaking or servicing missions to countries, areas or locations as authorized by the General Assembly or the Security Council;

(j) Arranging for dissemination to the public of information on United Nations activities and decisions;

(k) Providing the programme planning, financial, personnel, legal, management and general services that are essential for the rational selection of work items and allocating resources among them and for the effective, economic and efficient performance of the services and functions of the Secretariat, within the legal framework of regulations, rules and policies adopted by the General Assembly.

#### Salient features of the organization of the Secretariat

2. The Secretariat is headed by the Secretary-General who is the Chief Administrative Officer of the United Nations. In the economic and social fields, he is assisted in carrying out his responsibilities as Chief Administrative Officer by a Director-General for Development and International Economic Co-operation. The Secretariat is divided into several major units each of which is headed by an Under-Secretary-General, an Assistant Secretary-General or an official of equivalent level. They direct and manage the functions of the major units under the guidance of the Secretary-General and, wherever called for, of the Director-General. The major units are variously denominated as "department", "office", "secretariat" or "centre" (henceforth referred to as departments/offices).

3. Each department/office is divided and subdivided into several hierarchical organizational elements, each of which, under a supervisor, is responsible for a segment of the functions of the department/office concerned. The lowest element in each hierarchical line has several working-level staff who, together with similar staff in other hierarchical lines, produce the bulk of the "outputs" (products/services) required of the department/office concerned. The supervisors at different hierarchical levels direct and manage the work of the organizational elements concerned. They are also required to produce some of the outputs, particularly in departments/offices that have several supervisory levels. At some hierarchical levels, the supervisors are assisted in their supervisory and administrative work by a staff office, e.g., an office of the Under-Secretary-General and an executive office, so that they can devote more of their time to the production of outputs.

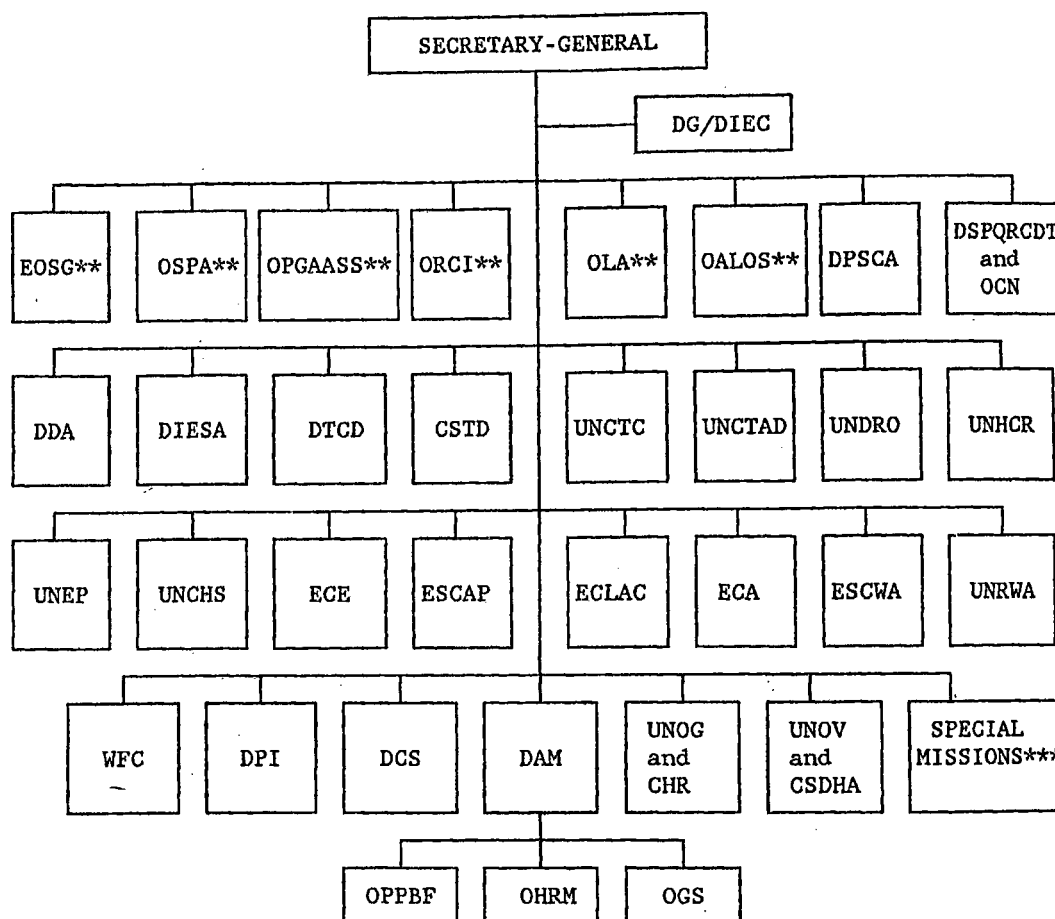
4. The number of supervisory levels in the Secretariat varies from one to seven, excluding the levels of the Secretary-General and the Director-General for Development and International Economic Co-operation. The hierarchical elements of departments/offices are denominated as "centre", "division", "branch/service", "section", "unit" or "subunit". The Secretary-General has adopted certain norms for the nomenclature of these elements, a summary of which is provided in paragraph 19.

#### Coverage of the Manual

5. The present Manual describes the functions and organization of the departments/offices that are financed fully or partly from the regular budget of the United Nations, that is to say, from the assessed contributions of Member States. It does not include the descriptions of functions and organization of units that are exclusively supported by extrabudgetary funds or are autonomous, although a list of such units is provided in annex III. It also does not cover the functions and organization of the International Court of Justice.

6. An organization chart of the departments/offices covered in this Manual is provided on page 4. Some of the offices are shown together with other offices as they have a common head.

# ORGANIZATION CHART OF THE SECRETARIAT\*



\* Shows the departments/offices that are fully or partly financed out of the regular budget of the United Nations and are not a part of another department/office, except in the case of the Department of Administration and Management, where subsidiary offices are indicated. Some of the departments/offices, in all or specific matters, may report to the Secretary-General through another Under-Secretary-General and/or the Director-General for Development and International Economic Co-operation. For the full titles of the departments/offices, see the table of contents.

\*\* Historically, this office has been identified as part of the Offices of the Secretary-General.

\*\*\* The number of special missions varies from year to year and hence no specific missions are shown.



## Format of the Manual

7. The present Manual is divided into loose-leaf sections. Each section contains the statement of functions and organization of a department/office. The statement begins with an overview of the historical background and broad functions of the department/office and is followed by the description of functions of its authorized subsidiary organizational elements. It also contains an organization chart of the department/office.

8. Some types of organizational elements are common to many or all departments/offices. In order to avoid a repetition of the description of functions pertaining to those organizational elements in individual sections of the Manual, they are described in the present section (see paras. 13-18). These descriptions should be read wherever a reference to them is made in individual sections.

9. There is no particular order in the listing of sections. Each section is identified by the name of the department/office. In the earlier edition of the Manual the sections had an alphabetical numbering system. This created a problem for keeping the section numbers intact whenever a new section had to be inserted in the list.

10. In order to facilitate the identification of the hierarchical level of an element, as well as the retrieval of descriptions pertaining to specific elements, the organizational elements in each section are numbered. The numbering system adopted also makes a distinction between "line" and "staff" elements. The line elements are numbered by arabic numerals in a decimal system. The staff elements either do not bear any number or are identified alphabetically, as appropriate. No number is used in the case of heads of departments/offices.

## Status of the Manual and procedures for amendment or revision

11. The description provided in the present Manual represents the authorized functions and organization of the elements included in it. As stated in administrative instruction ST/AI/239 of 5 August 1976, it should be "the basis of entries in the annual list of staff in the United Nations Secretariat, the telephone directory [and other directories], the P.5 personnel action form and miscellaneous administrative issuances. References to organizational units and functional titles of officials (where such titles are derived from organizational nomenclature) must conform to the organizational nomenclature used in the Manual".

12. The responsibility for initiating the revision of texts of the Manual following any changes that have been authorized lies with the department/office concerned. A revised text, including supporting documents, should be forwarded to the Management Advisory Service, which will issue a Secretary-General's bulletin after approval by the Under-Secretary-General for Administration and Management on behalf of the Secretary-General. The information required by the Management Advisory Service for processing the text is indicated in bulletin ST/SGB/L50/Rev.1 of 1 June 1977 and administrative instruction ST/AI/346 of 5 November 1987. A set of guidelines for the preparation of text for the Manual is available from the Management Advisory Service.

Functions of elements that are common to all or many departments/offices

13. Head of department/office. The functions of a head of department/office are as follows:

(a) Finalizing the medium-term plan and programme budget proposals of the department/office, ensuring that the proposed outputs would fulfil the priority needs of their users and the legislative mandates;

(b) Appearing before the legislative organs and their subsidiary bodies and providing them with information and explanations, as required, in support of the medium-term plan and programme budget proposals of his/her department/office;

(c) Carrying out the management activities or making managerial decisions that are required at his/her level for enhancing the effectiveness, efficiency and economy of the programme work and resources approved for his/her department/office, e.g., reviewing on a selective basis the outputs that are being produced;

(d) Approving reports, communications, decisions, recommendations, etc., which are to be approved at his/her level;

(e) Assisting, advising and keeping informed the Secretary-General and, as required, the Director-General for Development and International Economic Co-operation on matters concerning his/her department/office, and carrying out any special tasks that may be personally assigned to him/her by the Secretary-General;

(f) Co-ordinating activities or aspects thereof that are required to be interrelated at his/her level or can benefit from being interrelated;

(g) Discussing the issues and concerns in the field(s) assigned to his/her department/office with government representatives, members of legislative organs, other departments/offices of the Secretariat, specialized agencies, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations and individuals active in relevant fields and the press, as and when necessary;

(h) Ensuring that the supervisory personnel in his/her department/office utilize a substantial portion of their time in the production of outputs rather than in routine administrative tasks, particularly in departments/offices where administrative assistance has been provided and which have several supervisory levels;

(i) Ensuring that the distribution of work within the department/office is even and fair among comparable staff and that their expertise and availability for doing any work are fully taken into account before engaging any consultant or outside expert;

(j) Ensuring that the regulations, rules and instructions of the Organization, particularly those concerning recognition of merit and competence, are followed strictly;

(k) Producing on his/her own some of the planned outputs of the department/office concerned.

14. Deputy to an official. The functions of a deputy, wherever the post exists, are as follows:

(a) Assisting the official to whom he/she is a deputy in the performance of his/her functions;

(b) Acting as the officer-in-charge of the department/office during the absence of the official concerned;

(c) Producing on his/her own some of the planned outputs of the department/office concerned.

15. Supervisors. There are two kinds of supervisors in the Secretariat: the supervisors of working-level staff and the supervisors of supervisory staff. The latter may be called higher-level supervisors. The functions of a supervisor of working-level staff are as follows:

(a) Formulating the medium-term plan and programme budget proposals of his/her organizational element in consultation with appropriate staff members and keeping in view the types of outputs that may be needed by its clients and the legislative directives in the field concerned;

(b) Assigning work to the staff members under his/her supervision fairly and evenly;

(c) Reviewing the specifications of outputs to be produced in his/her organizational element and approving them or recommending their approval to higher authorities;

(d) Producing on his/her own some of the planned outputs of the department/office concerned;

(e) Reviewing the progress of work in his/her organizational element and taking appropriate action for accomplishing the work or modifying the work plan and reporting thereon to his/her supervisor;

(f) Reviewing the outputs produced by the working-level staff, in consultation with the staff member concerned, with a view to ensuring that they meet the specifications set for them, and approving them or recommending their approval to higher authorities;

(g) Carrying out periodic self-evaluation of the outputs produced in his/her organizational element, as called for under the relevant rules;

(h) Co-ordinating activities that are interrelated or can benefit from being interrelated;

(i) Representing or making arrangements for representation of his/her organizational element at relevant meetings and forums;

(j) Evaluating the performance of staff;

(k) Making recommendations for the promotion of staff under his/her supervision in accordance with the principles of seniority and merit;

(l) Making recommendations for the extension, modification and termination of contracts of staff under his/her supervision, such as the extension of fixed-term contracts, the granting of probationary appointments and conversion thereof to permanent appointment, the extension of contracts beyond retirement age, involuntary separations and transfers;

(m) Approving the leave schedule of the staff under his/her supervision;

(n) Keeping his/her supervisor informed of significant developments in matters concerning his/her organizational element.

16. The functions of a higher-level supervisor, i.e., a supervisor of supervisory staff, wherever such posts exist, are as follows:

(a) Reviewing the recommendations of lower-level supervisors and approving them or recommending their approval to higher authorities;

(b) Consolidating, wherever required, the material submitted by organizational elements reporting to him/her;

(c) Co-ordinating activities that need to be interrelated at his/her level;

(d) Evaluating the performance of supervisors reporting to him/her, and countersigning the performance evaluation reports written by lower-level supervisors;

(e) Producing on his/her own some of the planned outputs of the department/office concerned.

17. Staff office. The staff office, e.g., the office of the Under-Secretary-General, provides support services that facilitate the exercise of supervisory responsibility by an Under-Secretary-General, an Assistant Secretary-General or an official of equivalent rank. In some cases, it is called a cabinet. The officers working in such offices do not exercise any formal authority of their own. They carry out work in the name of the official to whom the office is attached. The functions of such staff elements include the following:

(a) Routing correspondence to appropriate officials and keeping the Under-Secretary-General or Assistant Secretary-General informed of such actions;

(b) Advising officials on the instructions of the Under-Secretary-General or Assistant Secretary-General;

(c) Drawing the attention of the Under-Secretary-General or Assistant Secretary-General to communications which need to be acted upon by him/her urgently;

(d) Consolidating materials generated by various units reporting to the Under-Secretary-General or Assistant Secretary-General;

(e) Developing a system of follow-up of progress of various activities that are carried out by the organizational elements reporting to the Under-Secretary-General or Assistant Secretary-General and assisting him/her in conducting follow-up meetings;

(f) Ensuring the maintenance of a log of all incoming and outgoing correspondence addressed to or signed by the Under-Secretary-General or Assistant Secretary-General;

(g) Ensuring that all relevant correspondence and background material are attached to communications that must be acted upon by the Under-Secretary-General or Assistant Secretary-General;

(h) Ensuring the maintenance of a calendar of meetings of the Under-Secretary-General or Assistant Secretary-General and taking steps to collect files and papers for such meetings;

(i) In accordance with the general or particular instructions of the Under-Secretary-General or Assistant Secretary-General, representing or arranging for representation of the department/office at appropriate meetings;

(j) Carrying out activities that are not the responsibility of other officials in the department/office concerned as assigned by the Under-Secretary-General or Assistant Secretary-General.

18. Executive office/administrative unit. In each department/office or for several of them, there is an executive office that assists the head of the department/office and other officials in the discharge of their financial, personnel and general administrative responsibilities, so that they can devote more of their time to their substantive, supervisory and other managerial duties. In some departments/offices, it is called an administrative unit. These offices differ from staff offices in that the officers working in such offices have formal authority that has been delegated to them by the head of the department/office, whereas the officers of staff offices do not have any formal authority. The functions of an executive office/administrative unit include the following:

(a) Preparing instructions to the constituent elements of the department/office for the formulation of their medium-term plan and programme budget proposals, in accordance with the guidelines issued by the Office of Programme Planning, Budget and Finance; reviewing and consolidating such proposals in accordance with the instructions of the head of the department and in consultation with the heads of constituent elements; and participating in discussions with the Programme Planning and Budget Division for the finalization of such proposals;

(b) Authorizing the incurring of obligations and expenditures against the funds budgeted for the department/office in accordance with the allotment advice and clearance received from the Office of the Controller (in this function, the executive/administrative officer, or a designated official of the office/unit, personally acts as the certifying officer);

(c) Writing to the Office of Human Resources Management to initiate the process of filling vacant posts and authorizing, in the meantime, with the approval of the head of the department/office, the temporary lending/borrowing by the organizational elements concerned of vacant posts to/from other organizational elements, as may be admissible under financial and staff regulations and rules;

(d) Maintaining the seniority list of staff belonging to various occupational groups and, in consultation with the heads of the constituent organizational elements and with the approval of the head of the department/office, making recommendations on the promotion of staff;

(e) Processing recommendations to the Office of Human Resources Management for the extension, modification or termination of contracts of staff, such as the extension of fixed-term contracts, the granting of probationary appointments and the conversion thereof to permanent appointment, the extension of contract beyond retirement age, involuntary separations, transfers, etc., on the request of heads of constituent elements of the department/office and with the approval of the head of the department/office;

(f) Representing the department/office in the meetings of the Appointment and Promotion Board, appointment and promotion panels and other committees, as necessary, in accordance with the direction of the head of the department/office concerned;

(g) Authorizing home leave and other official travel on the recommendation of the heads of organizational elements and certifying the related entitlements of staff;

(h) Certifying education grant, dependency allowance, language allowance and other entitlements of staff;

(i) Preparing and maintaining leave records and other personnel data;

(j) Advising the heads of organizational elements to prepare the performance evaluation reports of staff and, in cases of rebuttal, suggesting names for inclusion in the investigating panel;

(k) Making appropriate recommendations in cases requiring exercise of discretionary authority or exception to Staff Rules (permission for outside activity, home-leave travel to a destination other than the home country, etc.);

(l) Certifying staff requests for visas and extensions thereof, identity cards, etc.;

(m) Issuing certificates to staff members regarding their service with the United Nations, salary, etc.;

(n) Assisting staff members or their dependants in obtaining their entitlements from the United Nations Joint Staff Pension Fund and other United Nations sources.

Norms established by the Secretary-General for organizational nomenclature 1/

19. The norms established for various terms are as follows:

<u>Terms</u>	<u>Norms</u>
Centre	A minimum of 20 Professional and higher-level posts and headed by an officer at the D-2 level, and exceptionally at the Assistant Secretary-General level. The term is to be used only in exceptional circumstances, e.g. as a result of a decision of the General Assembly or other organ.
Division	A minimum of 15 Professional and higher-level posts and headed by a Director at the D-2 level. (For regional commissions, a minimum of eight Professional and higher-level posts and headed by a Chief at the D-1 level.)
Branch/Service	A minimum of eight Professional and higher-level posts and headed by an officer at the D-1 level with the title "Head of Branch". The term "Service" is to be used for elements whose work is essentially of an administrative support or service nature. The terms "Branch/Service" should not be used in the regional commissions.
Section	A minimum of four Professional posts and headed by a Chief at the P-5 or P-4 level.
Unit	A minimum of four posts and headed by a chief of unit. For use of the term, there should be a demonstrated need for a designated supervisor and for recognition outside the department/office.

20. In cases where an organizational element meets the criterion of number of posts, but the level of the head is above the criteria for that level, more weight should be given to number of posts than to the level of head.

Notes

1/ For a detailed description, see A/C.5/32/17 of 3 October 1977, General Assembly resolution 32/204 of 21 December 1977, A/C.5/33/6 of 19 September 1978 and the second report of the Interdepartmental Working Group on Organizational Nomenclature of November 1979.

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